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The President's Daily Brief

8 January 1973

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

8 January 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Vietnamese infiltration has continued at a fairly steady rate in the first three months of the 1972-73 dry season, although it remains lower than the comparable total for the previous year. *(Page 1)*

In Laos, North Vietnamese gunners have carried out a series of heavy shellings against government positions near Saravane. *(Page 2)*

Moscow is moving to block a possible attempt by Bonn to give full voting rights to West Berlin's representatives in the West German Bundestag. *(Page 3)*

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VIETNAM

North Vietnamese infiltration has continued at a fairly steady rate in the first three months of the 1972-73 dry season, although it remains lower than the comparable total for the previous year. In the past three months approximately 45,000 men have started south, including more than 15,000 earmarked for the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. In the same period in 1971, more than 60,000 North Vietnamese troops entered the pipeline, but only 4,000 of these went to the northernmost provinces.

The substantial rise in infiltration to the northern provinces this dry season suggests that Hanoi intends to maintain a large combat force just below the Demilitarized Zone and is willing to accept a further decline in the strength of its forces farther south. Hanoi has been sending large numbers of tanks and artillery to the southern areas, however, and presumably hopes that increased firepower will partially offset the decrease in manpower.

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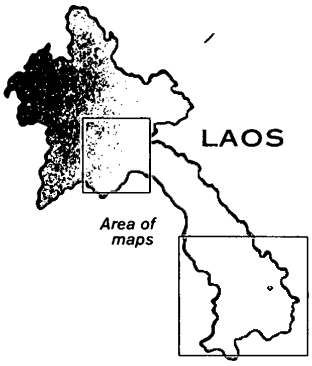

Government-held location
Communist-held location

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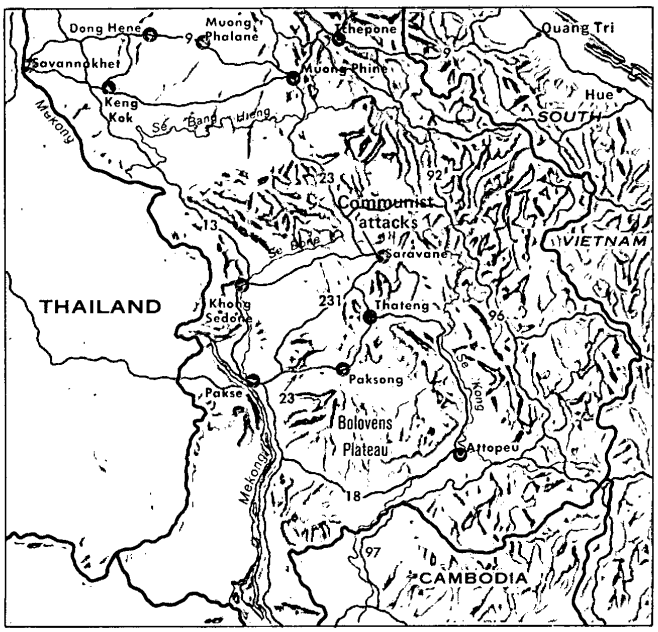
MILES



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LAOS

In their sharpest action in several weeks, North Vietnamese gunners have carried out a series of heavy shellings against government positions south and southeast of Saravane. Although ground action has remained generally light, several Communist tanks were sighted on Saravane's western edge yesterday. Elements of the North Vietnamese 968th Division's three regiments are now near the town.

Irregular forces north of the Plaine des Jarres at Bouam Long are taking advantage of a lull in Communist military action to strengthen their defenses and to increase their patrolling. Recent air strikes on a supply line west of Bouam Long apparently have helped to slow the pace of the North Vietnamese offensive.

To the west, government forces have not yet organized for a counterattack against the town of Sala Phou Khoun at the junction of Routes 7 and 13--which the Communists captured on 30 December. Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma has been embarrassed politically and militarily by the Lao Army's poor showing in this sector and has named a single overall commander for the area to eliminate previous command and control problems.

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USSR-BERLIN

Moscow is moving to block a possible attempt by Bonn to give full voting rights to West Berlin's representatives in the West German Bundestag. In a statement presented to the State Department by Ambassador Dobrynin on Friday, the USSR contended that such rights would violate the Four-Power agreement on Berlin and are unacceptable. The Soviets have made similar approaches to the UK, France, and West Germany.

West Berlin's representatives sit on Bundestag committees and vote on procedural questions, but have no vote on substantive matters. The USSR has long opposed any strengthening of political ties between West Germany and West Berlin on grounds that this undercuts its stress on the city's "separate status." Moscow's demarche indicates that, despite progress toward detente with Bonn, its concern on this question has not diminished.

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NOTES

USSR-Turkey: Moscow's recent $158-million credit to Turkey for the expansion of the steel plant at Iskenderun raises Soviet allocations for that project to $418 million. This is higher than Moscow's previous record contribution to a single project--Egypt's Aswan Dam. The Soviets in the past six years have also provided aid to other large Turkish industrial projects, including an oil refinery and an aluminum plant.

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USSR: Early this morning the Soviets launched an unmanned lunar probe from Tyuratam [redacted] The probe should arrive in the vicinity of the moon on Friday. Earlier probes have returned soil samples, placed a rover vehicle on the surface, or performed scientific experiments in lunar orbit.

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